

*The FBI's Counterintelligence Division produces the **FBI Monthly Counterintelligence Bulletin** to keep federal, state, local, and private sector partners informed about counterintelligence threats and issues.*

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Two Iranian Nationals Charged in Conspiracy to Procure Petroleum Tanker

Iranian nationals Amir Dianat and Kamran Lajmiri were charged on April 30 via a criminal complaint in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia with money laundering and violating U.S. sanctions against Iran for their alleged roles in a conspiracy to purchase a petroleum tanker to support the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps–Qods Force, a designated foreign terrorist organization. An investigation conducted jointly by the FBI and Homeland Security Investigations revealed Dianat and Lajmiri allegedly used the U.S. financial system to purchase the Nautic, a crude oil tanker valued at more than \$10 million, and concealed the vessel's Iranian end users in violation of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act and the Iranian Transactions and Sanctions Regulations. In addition to the charges, U.S. authorities filed a forfeiture complaint for more than \$12 million in funds allegedly involved in the scheme to acquire the tanker. If apprehended and convicted, Dianat and Lajmiri face up to 20 years in prison. [Read about the charges.](#)

Former Emory University Professor and Participant in Chinese Government Talent Program Pleads Guilty to Filing a False Tax Return

Former Emory University professor Xiao-Jiang Li pleaded guilty on May 8 in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia to one count of filing a false tax return for failing to report income he received through his participation in a Chinese talent recruitment program. An investigation conducted jointly by the FBI, Internal Revenue Service, and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services revealed while Li was researching Huntington's disease at Emory University, he was also conducting similar research at two Chinese universities as a participant in the Thousand Talents Program, a Chinese government program offering researchers incentives to work in China to advance the country's science and technology capabilities. According to court documents, he failed to report on his federal tax returns more than \$500,000 he received in foreign income by participating in the talent recruitment program. Li was sentenced to one year of probation and ordered to pay restitution. [Read about the sentencing.](#)

Former Cleveland Clinic Researcher Arrested on Wire Fraud and False Claims Charges

Former Cleveland Clinic researcher Qing Wang was arrested on May 13 and charged with wire fraud and making false claims in connection with his alleged failure to disclose his academic and financial affiliations with a Chinese university and talent recruitment program. As the recipient of more than \$3 million in grants from the National Institutes of Health, Wang was required to disclose financial conflicts of interest, including financial support from foreign governments or foreign entities. However, an investigation conducted jointly by the FBI and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services revealed he allegedly concealed from the Cleveland Clinic and NIH his position as a dean at China's Huazhong University of Science and Technology and his participation in the Thousand Talents Program. Under the terms of his Thousand Talents contract, the Chinese government allegedly provided Wang with \$3 million in research funding, as well as free travel to and lodging in China. If convicted, he faces up to 20 years in prison for wire fraud, up to five years in prison for false claims, and potential financial penalties. [Read about the charges.](#)

University of Arkansas Professor Arrested for Wire Fraud

Simon Saw-Teong Ang, a University of Arkansas professor and the recipient of more than \$5 million in federal research funding, was arrested on May 8 on wire fraud charges in connection with his alleged failure to disclose his close ties to Chinese companies and the Chinese government when requesting grant money from NASA. The FBI's investigation revealed Ang's allegedly fraudulent misrepresentations to NASA and the University of Arkansas about his conflicts of interest led to numerous wire transfers that supported his scheme to defraud both institutions. If convicted, Ang faces up to 20 years in prison. [Read about the charges.](#)

China Targets U.S. Organizations Performing COVID-19 Research

The FBI and Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) warned on May 13 of the likelihood that the Chinese government is targeting U.S. health care organizations, pharmaceutical companies, and academic institutions conducting COVID-19 research. According to the FBI and CISA, individuals affiliated with China have attempted to illegally obtain intellectual property and public health data related to COVID-19 vaccines, treatments, and testing from U.S. organizations. As outlined in the statement released jointly by the FBI and CISA, China's efforts pose a significant threat to the U.S. response to COVID-19, and organizations should take the necessary steps to safeguard their networks, systems, and intellectual property. [Read the press release.](#)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

The following information has been prepared by outlets outside the U.S. government and has not been corroborated by the FBI or its partners. It is presented here for your situational awareness.

Reuters Details Extension of Executive Order Authorizing Ban on Technology Posing National Security Risks

A May 13 article published by Reuters highlighted the White House's recent yearlong extension of an executive order declaring a national emergency regarding the security of the U.S. telecommunications supply chain. Detailing the government's extended authorization to block transactions involving information or technology posing an unacceptable risk to U.S. national security, the article cited U.S. lawmakers' reported view that the order addresses equipment manufactured by Chinese firms Huawei and ZTE. Reuters also pointed to the Federal Communications Commission's designation of both Huawei and ZTE as national security risks in November 2019, a move that effectively barred rural U.S. providers from using an \$8.5 billion federal fund to purchase equipment from the companies. [Read the Reuters article.](#)

Wired Exposes Chinese Hackers' Campaign Targeting Uighur Ethnic Minority Amid COVID-19 Pandemic

An article published on April 22 by *Wired*, an American technology publication, highlighted security firm Volexity's recent report on a campaign run by Chinese hackers to target the smartphones of the country's Uighurs—a reportedly suppressed ethnic minority in the Xinjiang area—at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic in China. According to the article, a Chinese hacker group compromised popular Uighur news and education websites, automatically infecting iPhones that visited the sites with spyware designed to gain access to users' messaging applications and other data. The *Wired* report pointed to the likelihood China is targeting Uighurs in Xinjiang in an attempt to intercept their communications with those outside China, highlighting the priority the country places on its surveillance of the minority population even during a nationwide health crisis. [Read the Wired article.](#)

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